

**Testimony of Timothy J. Robinson before the Environment Committee
Public Hearing, January 31, 2011**

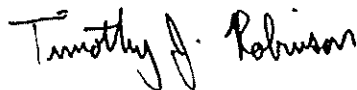
Dear Environment Committee Members,

I wish to declare my strong support for Senate Bill 831 with the aim that "52-557f of the general statutes be amended to include municipalities, political subdivisions of the state or nonprofit municipal corporations. I have noted another ten or so similar Bills under consideration at this time, which indicates to me the urgency that I share with many in the State about bringing our liability laws into conformity with those of surrounding states.

I have lived in the New Haven area for 22 years, and, as a year-round hiker, I have appreciated more and more the importance of maintaining and granting free access to our unrivalled trails and parks. But, inevitably, in light of the Conway v. Wilton ruling of 1996 and the MDC trial within the past year, new restrictions have reduced access to outdoor facilities, for fear of lawsuits and increased insurance premiums. Aside from the disappointment that one hiker may feel at a padlocked gate, the effects of such policies are disastrous for the State's tourism, recreation, and other related industries.

Of greater importance, however, is the harm that such short-sighted actions inflict upon our citizens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the obesity rate in Connecticut doubled between 1986 and 2007; the statistics and projections are especially dire for children who live here, with not only obesity, but type two diabetes, arthritis, and cardiovascular diseases expected to reach epidemic proportions unless current trends are reversed. The CDC has detected a "positive correlation" between the time children spend staying inside with TV and video games, and their unhealthy weight gain. The last thing we want to do now is to deny access to the trails, bike paths, swimming pools, and athletic fields for those who need them the most and are least able to demand them. In addition to the human toll that such restrictions will take, the cost to and strain upon our health care system will be staggering. There are plenty of precedent and no risk regarding the sensible Bill that you are considering today, and I urge the Legislature to take this initiative to amend current liability laws.

Sincerely,



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